

Proclamation 7651—Women’s History Month, 2003

February 28, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As our Founding Fathers worked to develop the framework of our Nation, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband: “I long to hear that you have declared an independency—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.” An early advocate of women’s rights, a farm and financial manager, and the mother of an American President, John Quincy Adams, Abigail Adams is one of many American women who helped establish the strength and vitality of our Nation. During Women’s History Month, we recognize the generations of American women whose important contributions continue to shape our Nation and enrich our society.

Through vision, hard work, and determination, countless American women have broadened opportunities for themselves and for others at home, in the community, and in the workplace. In 1809, Mary Kies became the first woman to receive a U.S. patent. By developing a method of weaving straw with silk, she helped advance American industry and set an inspiring example for other American women. Her pioneering efforts helped define our country’s entrepreneurial spirit and paved the way for future generations of women to take pride in their talents and creativity.

Since Mary Kies’ groundbreaking achievement, many American women have become successful entrepreneurs and business professionals. In 1905, Madam C.J. Walker started her own business by creating and selling hair care products for African-American women. After a decade, her company was highly successful and employed more than 3,000 people, and at the time, was the largest African-American owned business in the United States. Today, Madam Walker is remembered for her business accomplish-

ments, efforts to create new opportunities for women, and for her contributions to her community.

Driven by the legacy of these extraordinary figures, American women from all backgrounds continue to break barriers and fulfill their personal and professional potential. At the dawn of the 21st century, women have more choices than ever before. Between 1992 and 2002, the number of female college graduates in the United States has increased from 15.9 million to 23.6 million. Women account for 47 percent of all employed persons and are entering the American workforce in record numbers. In the last 10 years, their ranks have increased by 8.7 million. Furthermore, women-owned small businesses are growing twice as fast as all other U.S. firms, employing 7 million Americans and contributing to the vitality of our economy. To build on these successes, my Administration will continue our work to promote policies that advance the aspirations, hopes, and dreams of every American.

This month, as we celebrate remarkable women in our Nation’s past, I encourage all citizens to recognize the countless American women whose efforts continue to enhance the economic, social, and cultural life of our great Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2003 as Women’s History Month. I call upon all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to remember throughout the year the many contributions of American women.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

George W. Bush

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Proclamation 7652—Save Your Vision Week, 2003

February 28, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year, the number of Americans who suffer from vision loss increases, yet half of all blindness can be prevented through early detection and treatment. During Save Your Vision Week, we renew our commitment to protecting eyesight by promoting healthy eye care and by encouraging Americans to receive routine vision screenings and dilated eye exams.

Our sense of sight affects how we work, communicate, and learn. All Americans must be aware of the risk of vision loss and take steps to preserve and protect their eyesight, beginning with getting regular eye exams, using the appropriate protective eyewear, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. These small steps can make a big difference. When Americans take responsibility for improving their health, our whole society benefits.

Healthy vision is especially critical to our children's ability to receive a good education and establish a strong foundation in life. According to the American Optometric Association, 80 percent of learning depends on vision, yet 86 percent of children entering school have not had a thorough eye examination. Due to hereditary and prenatal factors, from a very early age, many children are at high risk for potentially severe eye diseases, including retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), amblyopia, and congenital glaucoma. One in four kids will develop myopia as teenagers. Children need regular eye care from birth to prevent and treat conditions that lead to visual impairment and blindness. Parents play a key role in obtaining eye care for their children and must be knowledgeable about the potential threats to a child's eyesight. For the future of our Nation, it is vital that we care for the visual health and well-being of America's children so they are able to reach their full potential.

As part of my HealthierUS Initiative and my Administration's ongoing commitment to helping the American people live healthier lives, I encourage all Americans to get preventative health screenings. These screenings may tell you if you are prone to developing certain diseases, can help protect your vision, and could even save your life. I particularly urge parents to ask their children's doctors about vision screenings and eye exams, which can help ensure eye diseases and conditions are detected and treated early, when treatment is most effective. Through education about healthy vision and promotion of good eye care, we help protect the eyesight of countless people across our Nation.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 138), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week." During this week, I encourage all Americans to learn more about ways to prevent eye problems and to help others maintain the precious gift of sight.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 2 through March 8, 2003, as Save Your Vision Week. I urge all Americans to make eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives and to include dilated eye examinations in their regular health maintenance programs. I invite eye care professionals, teachers, the media, and all public and private organizations dedicated to preserving eyesight to join in activities that will raise awareness of measures all Americans can take to protect and sustain our vision.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

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